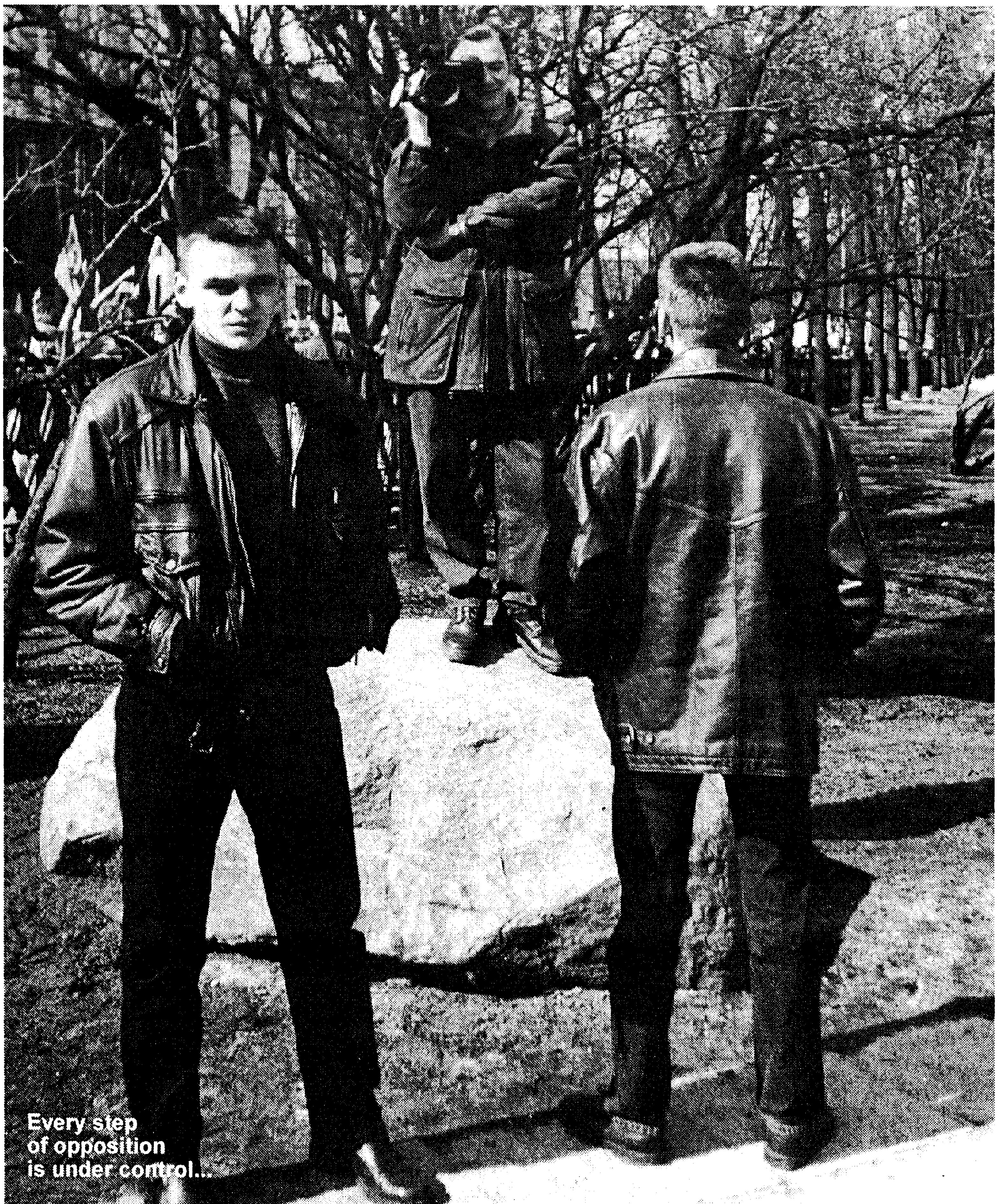
№ 9 (33)
May 1999

The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96"



Every step of opposition is under control...

LATIN-AMERICAN VARIANT?

SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF YURI ZAKHARANKA, ONE OF THE OPPOSITION LEADERS AND FORMER MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, INDUCES ON ALARMING THOUGHTS ...

All the dictatorships are very much alike. Of course, they can differ on some small points but in substance they remain resembling and have the same traits. And for sure the most common one is their intolerance towards people who have different view points. They are struggling with opposition view points using any, even the most strict, ignoble and inhuman means.

Belarusan regime has been

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CHRONICLE

On 24 April, Arnold Piacherski, chairman of an association of entrepreneurs of Minsk city and Minsk oblast «Community», died in a traffic accident at about 17.00 on the road Minsk-Moscow near the town of Krupki (Minsk oblast). Arnold Piacherski was 34 year old and was well-known for organisation the series of strikes on the stadium «Dynama» and on the market «Zhdanovichy». Arnold Piacherski was an agent of M.Chyhir in election campaign and actively took part in presidential elections scheduled on May 16.

On 5 May, Uladzimir Baradach, an agent of M.Chyhir, was detained by persons in civilian clothes near the Freedom Square. U.Baradach's «Mercedes» was stopped by police official not far from the building of the French embassy. Immediately after, people wearing civilian clothes appeared and introduced themselves as being the KGB officials. They brought U.Baradach to the Central Administration of Internal Affairs where he spent more than five hours. KGB officials and those of Administration of Internal Affairs searched the car of U.Baradach and confiscated 4.000 copies of leaflets saying «Freedom to Mikhail Chyhir!» They drew up a report for breaking the Article 172 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (agitation held in a wrong way). In compliance with this Article one can be sentenced up to fifteen days of administrative detention or fined. U.Baradach refused to sign this report. Then he was released.

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Courts did not take place

On May 1 a rally and meeting sanctioned by the city authorities took place in Independence Square in Minsk.

Representatives of the Social-Democratic party «Narodnaya Gramada» led by its leader Mikola Statkevich and those of Free trade unions with Mikhail Marynich at head created a separate column of route. Opposition column was joined by representatives of Mikhail Chyhir's crew.

Marchers went round of the Independence Square as it was made agree with the city authorities and police administration (at this time in the Square there was held an «official» meeting, whose participants were gathered by special resolution «from above» saying how many people there were to be present, how many flags, placards, President's portraits etc). After that participants of the action broke up. A small group of women singing folk songs remained near the hotel «Minsk». Police official using megaphone tried to out-voice them ordering to stop singing songs, for they, as it turned out, «were breaking the law».

Detentions of people from opposition column began straight away after the end of the 1 May demonstration. Mikola Statkevich, Ganna Statkevich (16 year old girl, a daughter of Mikola Statkevich), Igar Simchanka (resident of Brest), Mikhail Gancharyk, Leanid Dzeika, Alexander Abramovich (resident of Barysaw), Mikalai Ustsimenka, Siargey Saldatsenka, Mikhas Arastovich, Sviatlana Gancharonak, Georgii Salamenik, Tsimafei Dranchuk (a minor), Tatsiana Marozava (a minor), Mikhas Marynich (chairman of the Free trade union of metal-workers), Viachaslaw Kozel, Mikalay Zhukowski were detained. Minor participants of the 1 May demonstration were kept in custody centre more than five hours, although in compliance with current Belarusan legislation they could keep them not more than three hours.

Three drunk workers by accident got to opposition column and that's why they were also detained. But policemen released them right away and even bottles with vodka gave them back. Why? As it turned out, while drawing up a report policemen were informed that workers were ordered by plant-authorities to participate in the meeting and to cry out against NATO, for what they were promised to have a bonus and one day extra-weekend.

On 3 May all the detained were to be tried in the Maskowski district's court for breaking the Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. The judge Ye.Troinich decided to postpone the trials on 5 May to better familiarise herself with this case.

On 5 May the trials were stopped because the detained were found not guilty.

Information department of «Viasna-96»

Latin-American variant?

(continued from p.1)

demonstrating it from its first steps. Struggling with opposition Belarusan authorities seems have tried everything devised by such tyrants as Neron, Stalin and Hitler.

The latest events give reasons to assert that Belarusan regime is becoming familiar with practice of Latin-American dictators. Unwanted people in Belarus suddenly die, by chance perish and disappear. People imperceptibly vanish without investigation and trials, without arrests and prisons. It would be enough to mention just «mysterious» cases which have taken place recently they are deaths of Genadz Karpenka, Slavamir Ambruzhevich, Arnold Pyacherski, disappearances of Tamara Vinnikava and Yuri Zakharanka... This facts induce on alarming thoughts.

Unexpected disappearance of Yuri Zakharanka forced many people to fall to thinking about putting in practice in Belarus Latin-American variant of fighting with opposition. Former minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Yuri Zakharanka played one of the key roles in Belarusan opposition. He enjoyed authority. He was very popular among military people and wanted to set up an organisation «Officers' Union». He actively took part in presidential elections working together with Mikhail Chyhir. He knew a lot about G.Karpenka and T.Vinnikava... That's why awkward attempts by Belarusan authorities to link his disappearance with «criminal» are groundless. It's nothing but political terror. And it is obvious for everybody who is familiar with the history, particularly with that of Latin America.

Tranquillity of Belarusan authorities in this connection is not clear. All this cast suspicion on Belarusan authorities. They did nothing to clear up the above mentioned facts. Ex-head of the National Bank T.Vinnikava disappeared on 8 April. Yu.Zakharanka – exactly in a month (on May 8). A lot of time already has passed since their disappearance but investigation has no idea of even their possible location.

On one hand according to Anatol Lyabedzka, deputy of the 13th Supreme Soviet and leader of the Association of Young Politicians, someone persistently spreads rumours with following content: «who is next?» Bagdankevich? Shlyndzikaw? Ganchar?... «By this authorities want to threaten opposition and to urge on it to emigrate», — believes A.Lyabedzka.

But on the other hand they don't see activisation of pro-fascists organisations such as Russian National Unity. The authorities and first of all Lukashenka give everybody to understand that for self-preservation they will stop at nothing.

Andrei NALIVA

Letter to an editor

Everybody was subjected to pressure...

I am writing you a letter by which I want to tell you about repressions against members of Svislach district commission on presidential elections (Grodna oblast - edit.) Beginning from March 1999 all the members of our Commission have been summoned to the district's prosecutor's office. All of us have been officially warned. When I asked prosecutor's assistant: «Who warned us?» — he replied that papers about it came from Minsk.

In all there were ten people in our election commission. After series of threats it was left eight. To engage new people is very hard work. Everybody is afraid of repressions. People do not want to loose their jobs. The chairman of Svislach district commission on presidential elections is Viktar Tryshchanovich. V.Trashchanovich was asked by Anatol Kuzma, chairman of the District Executive Committee, to visit him. When V.Trashchanovich came to Anatol Kuzma's study he was surprised by seeing there also heads of District KGB and District Police. After baseless accusations V.Trashchanovich was proposed by A.Kuzma to leave the district and don't disturb him to work. A.Kuzma added also that he would do everything he could to eliminate the possibility for them to work well...

A.Kuzma also called out Anatol Valiuk, deputy chairman of Svislach district commission on presidential elections. Then he was asked to visit Kalach, investigator of local Administration of Internal Affairs. Investigator Kalach was interested in activities run by commission, financing of election campaign, records of proceedings etc. The secretary of commission Genadz Radetski, teacher by profession and director of studies of the school No3, was told that he would be dismissed without a warning in case he continued his activities in commission. Iosif Dmukhowski, father of one of the members of commission, was ordered by A.Kuzma to have a talk with his son and have an influence on him otherwise his son would be dismissed...

Such examples can be given without end. A pressure of this kind can be seemed at first insignificant. But in fact in province where the head of «vertical» (chief of a local executive power appointed by Lukashenka) is the only boss to decide anything it becomes very important. For example by order of A.Kuzma nobody will dare to give working place to «opposition member»...

With hope for victory. Long live Belarus!

Viktar NAVASAD

Mothers call for Justice for their Sons

Notes from the press-conference held on March 6, 1999 in the Human Rights Centre «Viasna - 96»'s office

On April 12, 1999 the Supreme Court of Belarus began the hearing of the murder case of Yawgen Mikalutski, the head of the State Inspection Committee in Magileu region, a delegate of the National Assembly and Lukashenka's friend. He was killed in the explosion of a radio-controlled device placed in the entrance of the house where he lived.

Three citizens of Magileu, Anatol Gawrilaw (24 years old), Raman Radzikowski (28 years old) and Victar Yancheuski (36 ears old) face this closed behind doors trial. They are charged with a number of offences. Victar Yancheuski is filed with a terrorist act against Ya.Mikalutski. Raman Radzikouski and Anatol Gawrilaw are charged with the preparation of the terrorist act against the President of Belarus. According to the data provided by the investigation a large number of arms and devices for watching and overhearing, used for preparing the terrorist act, were confiscated from the defendants.

The trial is a closed one. Christoper Paniko and Nadzeya Dudarava, the representatives of OBSE, were allowed to the court room only to be said that their participation was impossible.

On May 6, a press-conference of the relatives of Raman Radzikouski, Victar Yancheuski and Anatol Gawrilaw was held at the «Viasna-96»'s office.

The defendants' mothers informed that they had written a letter to three presidents: Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenka. In this letter they (and they are Nina Zaidze, Tamara Yancheuskaya and Yaugenia Gaurilava) asked to make the trial open. The mothers asked to allow the press, the relatives and public representatives to the court room. «Our sons' lives and justice depend on it. We are frightened and we worry about their lives. Because one of the defendants has already died in prison» (Valeri Tkachow) Natallya Dzyazhurnaya, Raman radzikouski's bride-to-be, and Lyudmila, Victar Yanchewski's wife, in their turn addressed their letters to International's organisations. They wrote: «The investigating authorities have failed to execute the president's order to find the murderer of Mikalutski. That is the reason of all the terrible falsification of facts, threats and pressure on our nearest. Behind the closed door of the court room they want to hide either the unsound charges or facts that can cast suspicious on the authorities».

At the press-conference each woman told about the calamity that has happened to their families.

Nina Zaidze (Raman Radzikowski's mother): «When we heard that Raman was charged with murder of Mikalutski and the preparation of the attempt upon the President we got just frightened. We couldn't understand how he had been able to take part in it. We received a letter from him (I won't explain the means by which we did it). Raman wrote: «You hope that everything will be all right. They will clear up everything and let me free. But you have to take off your pink-coloured spectacles and see everything as it is. I don't know what steps you have made (addressing the mother – P.S.). I have all the reasons to get ready for the worst. Now I am studying the case (I'm reading only the 16th volume and there are 37 of them) and see that it's fully fabricated. I haven't yet come across any serious proofs even against V.Tkachow (in 1997 the ex-KGB officer was found strangled to death in his prison cell. According to the investigation he was the main organiser of Y.Mikalutski's murder – P.S.). I don't need to speak about myself. The case is transparent. It would be too naive to think that during the trial someone will try to find the truth and to clear it up. Everything is falsified and planned beforehand by the executive and investigating authorities and at the very high level, by the way. To hope for justice means not to have a slightest idea of the «mayhem» going on there. That is why they have decided to hold the trial behind closed doors not to make it publicised. Everything would become known – I mean all the falsification, fake and fiction facts. It is likely to be an arranged trial with the known result. Mikalutski is not the main concern now. I'm charged with attempt on the president. Nowadays it may mean capital punishment, especially if to take into account all the fictions and falsified evidence I am «decorated» with like a New Year tree. I don't exclude the fatal result. What did they see in me when they rushed to me with their accusations like birds to the lighthouse?»

Nina Zaidze appealed by mass media to her son's friend – Alexander Kulikow, practically, the only witness on whose testimony the indictment is based. At that time A. Kulikow was abroad. Raman's mother begged him to come back and to tell the truth. A.Kulikow promised it once when he get to know that his friend is in jeopardy.



During press-conference (left-to-right): Natalya Dzyazhurnaya, Nina Zaidze, Yaugenia Gawrilava, Tamara Yancheuskaya, Ludmila Yancheuskaya.

Tamara Yancheuskaya (Victar Yancheuski's mother): «When it happened (Mikalutski's murder – *P.S.*) my son was at home. He was working with our neighbour. After he was detained, they questioned the neighbour and he told they had been working. Then he was warned: «If you talk like that it won't do». They visited him with machine-guns twice at 10 o'clock in the evening. They threatened him in order to make him his testimony. They questioned our neighbours in the same manner: what clothes our son had (the man see on the roof of Mikalutski's house when the murder took place had on a sports costume – *P.S.*). the neighbours answered they had never seen Victar in that clothes. One woman didn't even want to talk with them and she was said: «We are going to look for «moonshine» (alcoholic drink made illegally) in your house». Our neighbours say they are frightened. They are afraid of militia, of being arrested or deprived of something. My son is not guilty. He had no time to do what he is accused of. He has two children and he did nothing but work.»

Ludmila Yancheuskaya (Victar's wife): «He was detained for the first time on October 11, 1997. He was in custody for 30 days. In the morning of October 12 I rang up the board for the organised crime-prevention and asked what were the grounds for my husband's detention. «He is charged with Mikalutski's murder,» – they replied. Pay your attention: not «alleged» but «charged with». These are different things! In 17 days my

(To be continued on p.p. 4-5)

Mothers call for Justice for their Sons

(Continued from p.3)

husband was released. But on December 11, the same year, he was called to the board for the organised crime-prevention apparently to sign some documents. He hasn't come back by now, he must be signing the documents... Before the 11 of December there were 2 searches in our house. Nothing was found – no explosives, no arms. We only had a radio-station to keep in touch with my mother-in-law. She is very ill and we don't have a telephone. Anytime she may feel unwell and we need some means of communication to call the «ambulance». Before the charges were brought, in the evening on December 22, I had a talk with Lizhenka, an officer of the board for organised crime-prevention. For 25 minutes he was convincing me that I should ask my husband to testify against Tkachow (I didn't know him at that time). I was listening to him attentively but didn't give any answer. The following day the head of the board (BOCP) called me and also started to convince me to talk my husband into giving the necessary testimony. «I will even organise a meeting with your husband for you», - he said. He invited him to the office, sat him in front of me, gave a sheet of paper and told him to write a confession. He was charged in accordance with article 74 (brigandage), and it has a refinement: if one helps the investigation he can be released from criminal responsibility. My husband didn't commit any crimes and that is why he didn't write any confession. After the charges had been brought (December 23) interrogations started – official and not, during which Victar was hit on the head. He wrote a complaint but the medical examination didn't find any traces of assault or battery. I know that my husband never complained of heart problems but in the January of 1998 he had his heart tested in our Medical Centre.

I can explain it by the fact that on January 26 he was interrogated with the use of a lie detector. Then they arrange a meal and proposed him to eat. There were sandwiches with caviar and ham, cognac, coffee. Naturally, he couldn't resist coffee and drank it. It happened at 6 p.m. and only at midnight he came to his senses in his cell. I can make the conclusion that the coffee was with tranquillisers. He was interrogated half-asleep. The following day he was like after a big party: he faltered, swayed, in a day he broke out in a rash – it was the allergic reaction to the tranquillisers. I am a medical nurse and I'd better keep silent about the source of this information. I want to avoid trouble. During the investigation my husband was persuaded to give the necessary evidence against Valeri Tkachov and Vasil Lyavonau (ex-minister of agriculture who is in prison now). My husband rejected the suggestion. If he hadn't he could have been released (as the militia officer promised). Victar Yancheuski has been in custody for 17 months – 11 month in the solitary confinement cell. There were no windows in Magileu custody centre in the last cell he was in. So he found himself in a stone sack without light. When this misfortune happened (Mikalutski was murdered) our daughter was 7 month old. He was at home. The day before the wind had broken the aerial of our radio-station (it was on the tree, we live in a private house). The weather was fine and he decided to repair it, as it could damage the line of electricity transmission. In the morning he was at home with our neighbour. And all our neighbours saw him.

At August 26, 1998 the identification took place – Mikalutski's wife was to identify the murder. Before that she got acquainted with the criminal case, which comprised Victar's picture. Only the investigator and she were present at the identification. She «suddenly» recognised Victar and told he could be that man she had seen in the day of murder.

The trial is closed. (I was told) Yancheusky's fate is already decided. In spite of the fact that no examination of the 120 held testifies against my husband. The murder is the one who killed. He must be searched for. But in this case they detained a man with «the past».

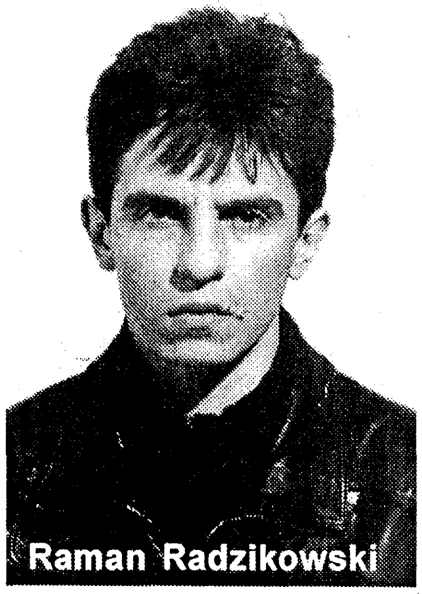
In 1990 – 94 my husband was in prison. He was charged with the same case as Tkachow. After the release they didn't have any business together, though they were building a sound together. Several times Victar with his acquaintances went to the dacha of Vasil Lyavonau, ex-minister of agriculture, to work.

As for Tkachow, I know from the local press that he was suing to the prosecutor's office and KGB for a long time, he lodged many complaints and by this disposed them both against himself».

Lyudmila Yancheuskaya says that although the trial is held behind closed doors, Mikalutski's wife and brother are present in the court room. But the defendants' relatives and public representatives are not allowed to the court room. So, for one party the trial is closed and for another – open.

Yaugenia Gawrilava (Anatol's Gawrilaw's mother): «I have never thought that such a misfortune would happen to me. My son is calm, kind and sensible, he doesn't drink, he has never used arms and has never been cruel. On the day of Mikalutski's murder he was not in the town. He was somewhere in Russia. I even don't know where exactly: by this time I haven't had a possibility to talk with him. I only met him in the investigator's office. I saw that my son had changed greatly. I asked him about it. «I just sleep a lot» – was the reply. But I think it is because of awful tortures. People confirm it. Victar Yancheuski and Gawrilaw were in the same cell when he was beaten up. They even intervened. But my son didn't say anything about it, he tried to hide it.

Only on October 9 he went to the garage and heard about the murder there. On the same day I came home and found a note from him that there had been a search in our house. They took the cassettes which they returned later. Nothing was said about arms.


Raman Radzikowski


Anatol' Gawrila


Victar Ya[illegible]uski

He was arrested for 5 days on that day. It is stated in the charge-sheet that he put up resistance to militia but the investigator later laughed: «What resistance this fellow can offer?» He was released and they watched him. On October 21 when he was going by a 21 bus a militia man came up to him and took him to the militia stationary post, no witnesses, nothing... They made the minutes and punished him by 3 days' detention. The stated accusation was «using bad language in public places». After that he cried openly and said: «Mam, how could I be charged by the service of the board for the organised crime-prevention.» They took him into custody for 30 days and released after 17 days. I was said the following: «Your son didn't take place in anything. We protect him». All the time they promised protection. After he had been released telephone, door calls began. To the question «Who is there?» they answered: «Friends

from militia». We couldn't live a calm life. For my son it all was unexpected and he had really hard time. In January 1998, before his birthday (he was 22) he left for a month in an unknown direction. The board for the organised crime-prevention asked about him. On January 28 my son returned to Magileu. He went to the board himself and didn't come back – he was taken to the KGB custody centre. My son believed in justice and that is why he went to them. By this time I don't know a tenth part of what I should know.

Natalya Dzyazhurnaya (Raman Radzikowskii's fiancйe): We were preparing for the wedding when the murder of Mikalutski took place. Moreover Raman was studying Catholicism, preparing for baptising. When Raman was arrested they made search in our house, a timber machine and the rests of the threads and insulating shaving were confiscated. Once people came to my work, showed identity cards of the KGB employees. Shortly after this I was made redundant. We were advised to take a woman lawyer. But preliminary investigator told us: «We will break your wings!» We didn't know that this lawyer's husband was prosecutor. Ve-ry soon the lawyer refused to take the case. After this we had three more searches. They didn't find anything you can charge a person with murder of Mikalutski or with an attempt on president's life. Firstly Raman was arrested for 30 days, after this the wounds he had after surgery festered. I told the preliminary investigator: «It will be on your conciseness if you make person an invalid.»

Natallya Dzyazhurnaya told how she was threatened. Somebody threw stones into her windows at night. The stones fell in the place where Natallya usually sleeps. She was warned: «If you want to live – don't interfere in this case!»

The former judge Yuri Sushko who asked for political asylum in the West characterised Mikalutski's case in the following way: «Everybody remembers that Lukashenka was present at funeral and promised to find all the criminals and enemies in ten days. It's difficult to judge about the investigation process, its' objectivity. Nobody knows what real evidence they had. The one suspected (Valeri Tkachow) – hang himself – a very mysterious death. This was a person who wasn't able to commit suicide... And what is the closed trial in our republic? It is the same as not to have it at all... Alexanderh Lukashenka himself was considered a victim in this case. There was a special resolution about this. The confession of one witness that the attempt on president's life was being prepared was enough to consider him a victim...»

Let's not make any conclusions about this case. What can you ask from people who went through psychological pressure and tortures during the investigation? There is a lot unknown and unexplainable in the Mikalutski's case. And if the trial will be closed behind doors – not only the public but even relatives of the accused won't know the truth. The only demand the relatives of the defendants have is to make the trial open to the public.

Palina STSEPANENKA

He Was Not Afraid of the «System»

Inhabitant of Gomel Adam Lobudzew keeps a simple card from the town of Gorkii as a precious memory.

«Dear Adam Andreevich! Thank you very much for attention! The apples are very tasty. We wish you health and happiness. Alena. Andrey. November 12, 1980.»

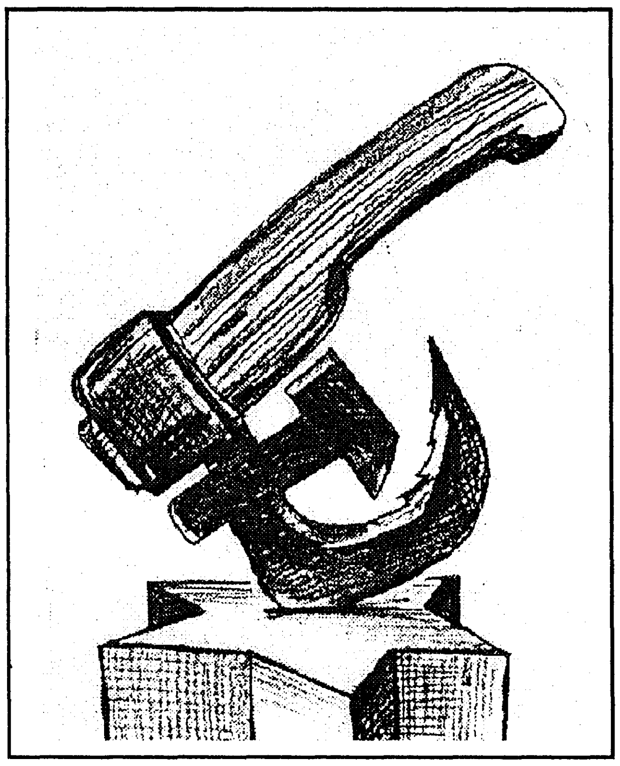
This is not a simple card. This is a card from someone being in custody. Greetings from exile. From Andrey Dmitrievich Saharov.

From the newest history of our society it is a well-known fact that activists of Belarusan spiritual opposition to the Bolshevik regime had almost no ties with the dissident circles of Moscow. It was opposition of painters, writers, scientists and individuals. Adam Lobudzew was such an individual. At that time almost nobody at work or at home supported such people. I remember how people were afraid to show slightest disapproval of the soviet regime, worrying that the whole family will suffer. But Adam Andreevich said what he thought. And he had things to talk about.

He understood very well how human rights were respected in the Soviet Union. Concern of the party about happy life of the workers touched him as well. Beginning from 1972 the citizen Lobudzew litigated with Gomel authorities about his piece of land, that was in fact taken by the state. New plan of the development of the city was the reason for this. The state decided to build it's own block of flats on the land the Lobudzew family was planning to build its' house. On the 26th of September 1975 the authorities changed their decision but the happiness of the Lobudzew family was short. Soon after this the land was taken and the family had to live several years in a caravan... Adam Lobudzew is sure that the courts made unfair decisions under the pressure from the communist party and KGB.

Soviet intelligent services paid special attention to Adam Andreevich. He had to leave work under their pressure. Many times he was interrogated as his struggle for land and the ideas he expressed were classified according to the article 67 of the criminal code as «an anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.»

Adam Andreevich helped political prisoners of that time. He found out Saharov's address and went to the far town of Gorkii. He thought he would talk to the famous person, who was slandered by soviet newspapers. Adam Andreevich thought he would support him. Adam Lobudzew understood the level of his naivety only when he was standing on the street facing the house where Saharov lived. The house was surrounded by guide, and nobody allowed Adam Andreevich to visit Saharov. It was forbidden to visit people in exile...



There are cards from different dissidents, human rights activists and simple people who lived and thought in non-Soviet way in the private archives of Adam Lobudzew. This is a letter from the defender of the rights of the Jews Alexander Lerner: «Thank you very much for the parcel... I shared it with Yelena Boner, she took it with gratitude.» Adam Lobudzew is proud that famous people, defenders of human rights are among his friends. He was corresponding with Andrey Saharov, Alexander Solzhenitsin, Piotr Yakir, Anatolii Shiranski. And with a famous actor Savelii Kramarov. Adam Andreevich remembers what an outstanding person he was. Many of his friends immigrated. The only lawyer who didn't obey the Soviet party orders a woman from Moscow also immigrated to the United States. «It turns out that Communist party never was an ideology party. It was a well organised gang committing crimes on people,» – Adam Andreevitch is sharing his opinion.

He has been corresponding with the public prosecutor's office for the last 5 years. He thinks he should get back his right on land, his good name and salary beginning from 1985 when he had to leave work under the pressure of KGB. He also wants several people from the authorities to answer for the crimes they committed against him years ago. In 1993 the public prosecutor's office promised to investigate this case but didn't. And now it proposes Adam Lobudzew to stop correspondence. Maybe it happens because in his letters he speaks openly about the repression character of the Soviet institutions, gives the numbers of the people being repressed...

Adam Lobudzew says that many people ask for his help in the field of law. He turned into a real professional in his fight with the «system». Though he was a simple worker.

Tatsyana SNITKO

Events Facts Comments

(continued from p.1)

On 5 May, Valery Shchukin, journalist and well-known human rights activist, was tried in the court of Savetski district of Minsk city for taking part in anti-nuclear action on 2 April. He was brought a verdict – five days of administrative detention. The judge allowed him to celebrate the Victory Day. On May 10 Valery Shchukin made for custody centre. Being in custody Valery Shchukin decided to express his will and to vote for one of the candidate for presidential office. On May 13 representatives of the Central Election Commission drove up to the custody centre but in vain. V.Shchukin was refused to realise his suffrage.

On 6 May, press conference was held in the headquarters of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» with participation of relatives of Raman Radzikouski, Anatol Gawrilaw and Vicar Yancheuki who are charged with assassination of Yawgen Mikalutski, chairman of the State Inspection Committee of Magileu oblast, and simultaneously with attempt upon a life of president Lukashenka. Mothers of the accused addressed with an open letter to the presidents of the USA, Russia and Belarus – Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenka – with request to do best of they could to make the process open. Mothers asked to allow the public representatives to court hearings as well as the press and relatives.

On 7 May, Viktar Yafimaw, deputy chairman of the Gomel region's commission on presidential elections, was stopped by the road police on the road out of Minsk. His car was searched. They confiscated 25.000 copies of voting-papers.

On 7 May, Igar Khadz'ko, chairman of the Leninski district commission on presidential elections of the city of Babruisk, and Ales Chygir, activist of election campaign, were detained in Babruisk while spreading placards informing the city residents about forthcoming presidential elections, scheduled on May 16. They were brought to the Leninski district's Administration of Internal Affairs where they were forced to put down explanations drawn up reports of confiscation of placards and leaflets.

On 7 May, the flats of Igar Kiryn, Yawgen Faletski and Cenadz Yanushewski were searched in Glusk. I.Kiryn was the chairman of a local commission on presidential elections, Ya.Faletski and G.Yanushewski – deputy chairmen of that commission. The search was carried out by the group of policemen led by lieutenant Kuz'miankow and it was sanctioned by the prosecutor of Glusk district Igar Savastsew. It was aimed at confiscation of any documents connected with presidential elections. In Igar Kiryn's flat they confiscated the resolution № 192 of the Central Election Commission and the bulletin of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» («Right to Freedom» №5) containing the information about repressions against local election commissions. They found nothing connected with presidential elections while searching the flats of Ya.Faletski and G.Yanushewski.

On 8 May, Volga Barysawna Zakharanka, a wife of the former minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, applied to police with a statement about disappearance of her husband. V.Zakharanka informed that on May 7 in the evening she spoke with her husband last time. According to Volga Barysawna Yuri Zakharanka told her that he just parked a car and was going home. «In 10 minutes I am at home», — said Yuri Zakharanka. A way from parking place to the house in fact takes not more than 10-15 minutes. Yuri Zakharanka disappeared while going home. Volga Zakharanka does not exclude even the worst scenario. «They can do with him everything they want and then say that it was an accident», believes Volga Zakharanka. The wife of former minister of Internal Affairs asserts that Yuri Zakharanka was many times threatened and warned in connection with his activities: he helped Mikhail Chyhir in his election campaign and was going to set up the «Officers' Union». «It was clearly seen that my husband was a headache of Belarusan authorities. We were watched and overhead and threatened all the time»,- says Volga Barysawna. Yuri Zakharanka was appointed the minister of Internal Affairs in 1994 but in a year and a half he was dismissed. The reason of his dismissal is considered Zakharanka's strict position to follow the law and the Constitution but not the president's will and his orders.

On 8 May, the flat of Larysa Dz'yakava, secretary of Glusk district commission on presidential elections, was searched. The search was carried out by policemen from Glusk Administration of Internal Affairs. Search warrant was given by prosecutor Igar Savas'tew. It was aimed at confiscation of any documents connected with election campaign. They confiscated the resolution by European parliament about situation in Belarus, instruction how to fulfil the voting-papers, communication about creation of Glusk district commission on presidential elections. It was six in turn search in Glusk carried out by policemen in flats of people engaged in election campaign.

On 8 May, some members of district commissions on presidential elections were detained in Magileu. Among them was Igar Stukalaw got papers to conduct presidential elections. He was detained on his way out of the building where the Magileu oblast election commission was placed. For his attempt to get back to the headquarters of election commission I.Stukalaw was accused of «insubordination to policemen' orders» (Article 166 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus). He was kept in the Central district's Administration of Internal Affairs of the city of Magileu up to a trial. Court hearings took place on May 10. I.Stukalaw was sentenced to three days of administrative arrest. All the materials and papers connected with elections were confiscated.



On picture: Uladzimir Kudzinaw's wife Zoya with daughters after repeated marriage withe her husband, which took prace in Minsk in custody centre.

On 8 May, the car with the members of district commissions on presidential elections of the towns of Krychaw and Cherykaw – Syargei Baravikow, Tatsiana Danilava, Syargei Niarowny, Genadz Rawkow – was stopped by policemen led by lieutenant Kuliashow at about 18.00 on Leninski street in Magileu. Having examined the luggage police officials brought detained people to the Administration of Internal Affairs of the Central district of Magileu city. The car was searched. They confiscated 13.000 copies of documents linked with election campaign. All they were kept more than three hours in the Administration of Internal Affairs without permission to make a call.

On 8 May, Anzhela Bakach, Mikhas Viarbowski and Igar Khadzko, members of local commissions on presidential elections of the city of Babruisk, were detained by policemen led by captain Uladzimir Kuliashow near bus-station in Magileu. All the materials they had were confiscated (15.000 copies). The detained were taken explanations. They were kept in Administration of Internal Affairs some three hours and were not allowed to make a phone.

On 9 May, at about 13.00 in Magileu an armed group of policemen (15 people) blocked the headquarters of Magileu oblast commission on presidential elections. They searched it and confiscated all the papers linked with presidential elections – all together 1.400 copies. They drew up a report about confiscation of papers.

On 9 May, Yawgen Murashka, chairman of oblast election commission on presidential elections, was detained in the town of Kalinkavichy (Gomel oblast). While exami-

ning his car policemen found voting-papers as well as other documents connected with election campaign (reports of oblast commission and that of district commissions of Zhytkavichy, Kalinkavichy, Petrykaw, Yelsk, Narawliany, Khoiniki, Rechytsa etc.) On may 10 Ya.Murashka was tried in the court. Court's verdict was as follows: 10 days of administrative arrest.

On 9 May, Anatol Fiodaraw, deputy chairman of Magileu oblast commission on presidential elections, and Aleg Dziachkow, member of local election commission, were detained at a bus station in Magileu by a group of policemen. Among them were chief inspector of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Magileu Executive Committee Ivan Galalobaw, chief inspector of a social order department Valery Uspenski, chief inspector of investigation department of the Leninski district's Administration of Internal Affairs Yawgen Buryski and sergeant Mikalai Valadzenka. Police officials confiscated all the papers connected with election campaign. Court hearings on the case of Anatol Fiodaraw were scheduled on May 11. However A.Fiodaraw didn't appear in the court. He addressed the court by a statement asking it to postpone the trial because of his bad condition. According to the judge this statement is nothing but evidence of disrespect of court. On 12 May A.Fiodaraw was detained at midday and brought to the Leninski district's court of the city of Magileu where he was sentenced to 3 days of administrative detention for court's disrespect.

On 10 May, Mikhas' Naranovich and Andrei Tarkan – members of a local commission on presidential elections – were detained by policemen in Buinichy (small town in Magileu district). They were detained while going round the residents willing to execute their right to vote. The detained were brought to the local Administration of Internal Affairs and kept for two hours. They confiscated all the papers connected with election campaign: voting-papers, electoral rolls, mobile ballot-boxes. They drew up a report about confiscation.

On 10 May, members of local commission on presidential elections Kanstantsin Mys'livets (together with 10-year old daughter) and Vasil Prakopchyk were detained at 19.00 in Dragichyn, Brest oblast. The detained were confiscated 160 voting-papers. After the detained were drawn up a report they were released on condition to come to Administration of Internal Affairs on June 11 at 8 o'clock in the morning.

On 10 May, members of a district election commission Piotr Zosich and Valery Gniadz'ko were detained in Luninets, Brest oblast, by armed policemen while talking with young people. They confiscated either voting-papers and seal and accused them for breaking the article 167 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (breaking the law on meetings and demonstrations). On may 11 they were tried in court, which sentenced P.Zosich to 10 days of administrative arrest and V.Gniadz'ko was fined 1 million roubles.

On 10 May, a group of policemen together with people wearing civilian clothes searched private printing house «Palimark». «Palimark»'s officials were explained that there was a bomb in the building. They looked for a bomb for two hours while being interested more in printed materials than in bomb. This search was caused by an order for KGB and Police officials to look for and confiscate all the papers connected with presidential elections.

In May, a group of Minsk residents led by famous barrister Gary Paganiayla lodged a complaint to the Maskowski district court. Uladzimir Yarmoshin, major of Minsk city, was a respondent. In February, 1999 by his decision U.Yarmoshyn forbade anti-fascist march on Skaryna Avenue. To plaintiffs' mind he violated the citizens' rights.

On 11 May, Kastus' Rez'nichak, member of a local commission on presidential elections, was detained on Zhukowski street in Minsk. He was going round the flats of people willing to realise their suffrage in advance. Police officials confiscated a mobile ballot-box, voting-papers and other documents connected with presidential elections. They also said him to expect subpoena.

On 11 May, location of the Association of Belarusan Language was searched by soldiers of a sapper department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They looked for a bomb for one hour but in vain.

The Life of «Viasna...»

On April 23-25, the 13[th] meeting of Centres for Pluralism titled «Fighting for Democracy» took place near the Minsk city. Lots of delegates of Central and Eastern Europe and representatives of the most active non-governmental and non-profit Belarusan organisations were present at the meeting. Political prisoner from Cuba Khaw'er de Sespendes who served more than 20 years in jails under Fidel Castro regime took part in the meeting. He reached Minsk with adventures. First he tried to get Minsk by air-craft but in vain. In Minsk airport he was sent off to Warsaw. Then by train he was allowed to cross Belarus's border.

The second day was devoted exceptionally to Belarusan problems. Ales Byalatsky, chairman of «Viasna-96», made a report on situation with human rights in Belarus.

On 27-30 April, human rights seminar under the title «Human rights. Missions and their role» was held in Warsaw by the OSCE mission in Poland.

Representatives of the OSCE missions from different countries as well as representatives of other international organisations (UN, UNESCO, CU), governmental and non-governmental organisations interested in discussing the working problems of the OSCE missions took part in this seminar. Belarus was represented by members of some non-governmental organisations as well as governmental representatives. Among them were representative of «Viasna-96» and Belarusan Helsinki Committee. Belarusan third sector criticised Belarusan authorities for not- respecting human rights in the country. Belarusan governmental side represented by Mr. Kulakowski, the chairman of official commission on human rights, in its turn tried to persuade the meeting that there were no human rights violations in Belarus at all.

From 30 April till 1 May, a joint Belarusan-Lithuanian conference «Prospects of mutual co-operation of non-governmental organisations» was held in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Belarusan delegation was represented by different public organisations. Among organisations which took part in the conference were Association of Belarusan Language, Malady Front, Belarusan Student's Association, Civic Society Centre, Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» as well as other organisations. During the course of the conference Belarusan guests visited the Belarusan language school named after F.Skaryna and met with Mr. Zyanonas Vaigauskas, chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Lithuanian Republic as well as with representatives of political parties and public organisations.

The conference drew attention of mass media. Member of the Central Election Commission Uladzimir Labkovich and representative of «Viasna-96» Valyantsin Stefanovich were interviewed by Belarusan channel of Lithuanian television, in which they commented on the situation in Belarus on the eve of presidential elections.

On 3-7 May, delegation of «Viasna-96» paid a visit to Prague (Czech Republic) on invitation of human rights organisations «Helsinki forum» and «People in Need». Very interesting cognitive programme was organised for Belarusan guests. Belarusans visited Prague city's court, prison for women under patronage of a convent, barrister's firm and police school.

On 11 May, meting with Mr. V.Sirotkin and Mr. I.Ahrbernard, representatives of European regional bureau of UNDP, was held in the headquarters of «Viasna-96» in Minsk. Guests were interested in human rights situation in Belarus.

On 13 May, meeting with representatives of Czech youth and human rights organisations, interested in contacts and closer co-operation with organisations working in the field of human rights, took place in the headquarters of «Viasna-96». Preliminary agreement on further co-operation was reached.

Alyaksei SHYDLOWSKI

Eighteen Months in Hell

Loszono custody centre has a peculiar history. It was opend in 1993 as an exemplary regime establishment. Its prototype was a famous Russian custody centre – «White Swan» in Salikalamsk. The legends about it are being told by now. «Black Stock» is situated in the country and the majority of examinations just pass it by. That is why this militia «mayhem» is going on here. As a result many prisoners go out of here maimed. Even «accidental» deaths happened. We also were sent here not accidentally at all...

As I got to know, some days later, Vadzim was put into a cell in the third building. That is the building for minors. As for me, I was directed to the second floor of the forth building, to the prison hospital. On the 1st floor of the building there were women's cells. At about 6 a.m. I was accompanied to my «hata» (home». Having opened a heavy lock, the guard shoved me into the cell and clanked the bolt behind me. One of the prisoners immediately raised to his feet and, seeing that I was not well. Offered to have a seat. Then he questioned me: what I am, why I am here and why I was taken to hospital.

After listening to my story he got surprised because he had just read about me in the «Savetskaya Belarus» newspaper (by the way, it is the only newspaper allowed for reading in Zhodzina custody centre).

In the morning when the light was switched on in cell I looked around. After Stawbtsi custody centre this «hata» seemed to be even very «cosy». About 6 metres in length and 4 in width, three plank beds at the walls, a loo and a table with two benches in the middle, a small shelf nailed to the wall. All those things were metal. There were four people in the cell, though it was meant for six. I was explained that they try to keep the «hospital» not overcrowded. My cell-mates helped me to accommodate, they showed how to use everything and what is better not to touch. At 7 a.m. we were brought our breakfast.

Everybody in the prison is given diet nutrition which includes 200 g of milk, half a boiled egg and a doubled portion of rice (about 6 spoonfuls). For dinner they usually give potato soup as I a first course and boiled pearl barley (about 8 – 10 spoonfuls) as a second course. For supper – more usually a kind of clear soup which is rejected by everyone. Also the prisoners are given 250 g of dark and 400 g of white bread and 40 g of sugar for one day. Three times after meals the prisoners are given boiling water which the guards calls tea, spoons and plates are handed out only for meals, immediately after meals they are taken back. The schedule at the custody centre is the following: 6 a.m. – rising time, 7 a.m. – breakfast, 8 – 8.20 – checking, 1 p.m. – dinner, 6 p.m. – supper, and checking at 8.20 – 8.40 p.m. The prisoners have the rest of time at their disposal. But it doesn't please them at all. It is forbidden to sleep in the daytime, and the inmates my read only the books from the prison library. Once a month the books are distributed to the cells. All the books were published in the 50s. To send or to receive letters is forbidden and the only newspaper is «Savetskaya Belarus». To receive a TV set from the relatives is a great problem. Moreover, after any infringement of the regime the inmate is taken by the guard.

To keep the convicts busy somehow militia men make them tidy the cells by pouring cold water on the floor. It is done in the following way: all the convicts are driven out of their cells and made to stand for «stretching». «Stretching» is the position when you rest your arms against the wall and your legs, stood apart, on the floor. This position is very tiring and convicts often fall. If they fall the guard makes them return to the «stretching» position with kicks. During stretching one of the guard opens the tap and points the spurt to the floor. The water pours until its level reaches the level of the cell's threshold. Then the convicts are ordered to take off their foot-wear and barefoot on the cement floor, with their feet 7 – 8 sm in the cold water to stand in the cell. Naturally, the personal belonging which are often kept under the beds got fully soaked. After that the guard ordered to take their personal cups for tea, to draw up the water with dirt and to empty the cups in to the loo. 20 – 30 minutes are given for this «procedure» and if you are late it is repeated. Usually after such tidying up half the cell are ill.

There is one more option for the guard to make the prisoners' spare time. In Zhoszina custody centre when a militia man is entering the cell (which usually happens during the checking) all the inmates and, necessarily, with one accord should cry out: - Welcome, mister chief!

Sometimes it happens that one person falls out of the accord and all the rest ahve to repeat. If they fail again they are driven of the cell and beaten. But different thing happen. Once the inmates failed to pronounce the salutation unanimously and the guard left the cell without saying a word. In half an hour the so-called «reserve» (3 – 4 guards in armourned suits) entered the cell. They took a dog with them. We understood why they had taken it when one of them put his hat on the dog's head. So, the dog played the role of a guard and when he barked, we had to salute it: Welcome, mister head!

It was going on for about 30 minutes...

But let's finish this «lyrical oligression» and return to our story. So, on September 12, 1997 I found myself in the cell No 120 of Zhodzina custody centre. The following day a young man appeared who complained of the stomach. He began to look for approaches to me, said he had read about my case and as an «experienced convict» advised to write a «penitential» letter to the president of Belarus (as Anatol Adamchuk, involved in Sharamet's case, did), or, at least to the «Savetskaya Belarus». He even promised to find paper, a pen, an envelope for me and even to send the «letter» by a guard. His main arguments were threats. He said I would be beaten, assaulted in the ordinary cell (not in the hospital), even Raped. Three days later the understood that his threats didn't have a necessary effect on me and left me alone. The following day he was transformed to another cell.

The first month of my and Labkovitch's imprinsonment was coming to its end. On the 23th of september we suddenly were ordered to hand over the linen, the mattresses and get ready for the stage.

Morally I was encouraged. As far as I understood something had to change. And, pulling all my courage together I again announced a hunger-strike in the custody centre.

But the reason for our calling out was trivial. Another investigator was appointed for our case – Vasil Styapanavitch Panin. The investigator was so-called «vazhnyak» (an investigator dealing with serious – «vazhnie» – offence

(To be continued)

(Continuation.
Beginning in №№ 31-32)

The Right to Freedom. The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna-96". Address: 220007, Minsk, p/b 88. E-mal:rights@v96.open.by Published twice a month in Belarusan, English and Russian languages. Circulation 299 copies. Editor-in-Chief Ales BYALATSKY.

In this number pictures by A.Karpovich and photos from the Centre "Viasna-96" archives are used.